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PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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THE DISCIPLINE OF TROUBLE.

"Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."—Heb xii. 11.

In his immortal discourse on trouble, the apostle sums up, in this passage, the benefit of trouble—and with a double or mixed metaphor or figure. Where a mixed figure is the result of poverty and ignorance, rhetoric despises it; but where it is the fruit of richness and culture, literature allows it and praises it. When, therefore, we find the apostle speaking of men being "rooted and grounded in love," that they "may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth and length, and depth and height," thus mixing the orchard and architecture together, we see there were so many images in his mind as he rushed on to the expression of his feeling, that we like it in spite of the inharmony.

So here, there is a mixed figure. It is the gymnasium and the garden that are mixed. Or, rather, one might say that it was the military ground and the orchard. "No trouble, no affliction, no chastening is for the present joyous, but grievous," saith the apostle; "but afterward it worketh the peaceable fruit of righteousness." It is as if he had said, "Trouble is like the orchard. When the blossom drops, the fruit, beginning to swell, is bitter and sour; but if you let it hang on the tree all summer long, the juice turns to sugar, and has a fragrant, aromatic flavor. That which was in the beginning sour, becomes very sweet and very delicious. And troubles, if you let them hang long enough, and let them have sun enough, are peaceable, acceptable fruits."

But then the apostle adds, "in them that are exercised thereby" —in those that are drilled, disciplined, put through all their paces and evolutions. For the verb is one that brings to view the training of athletes in a gymnasium for the duties of a soldier, or for

SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 6, 1873. LESSON: Heb. xii. 1-16. HYMNS (Plymouth Collection): Nos. 1235, 1230, "Homeward Bound."

atheletic purposes. When he brings in this second figure we can but smile to think of the apostle's meaning that apples and figs and peaches were drilled, disciplined, put through their paces and evolutions. But it is a good figure. The two parts of it work very well together if critics will let them alone, and if persons will accept them in the spirit in which they were given.

I propose, this morning, to use the latter figure, and to regard the discipline of trouble in this world as a soldierly training, as an athletic discipline, by which men are subdued to unity and harmony, with themselves and their circumstances. I have at times employed the other figure, and shown that troubles develop as fruits do, and as grain does. The general truth, whichever figure or whatever figure you employ, is this: that the things which men most dread, resist and avoid; the things which, when they befall men, they attempt to throw off, as if the dispensation of trouble were a pest to be got away from—that these things are tokens of God's fidelity; that they are his drill sergeants; that they are his schoolmasters; that they convey to us not simply lessons, but practice, evolutions, and final results which stand intimately connected with our manhood, and so with our capacity for enjoyment, and our rank and station hereafter, when we pass to the world of a true manhood.

Happiness in this world lies in the harmonization of a man's nature. Perfect happiness is the harmonization of a man's nature around about some central, dominant moral element. The grand element of love—the regnant one—is that. If every part of a man's nature were absolutely coincident with it, were in analogy and harmony with it, men would find themselves in a mood or disposition in which there could scarcely be any suffering that could be called suffering. At any rate, whether they might suffer in extreme cases or not, they would be in that condition out of which would flow continuous joy from the harmony of all the faculties. If men were harmonious around about some of their social instincts or feelings, so that every part of their mind, when the mood was on, was perfectly in subjection to this central, intermediate point of harmony, then life would be happy, although it would be on a lower plane, and in a less ravishing form, than if the point of harmony were higher.

Farther than that, if a man's life is perfectly harmonized around about a passion or an appetite, then there will be a great outcome of enjoyment, such as it is—coarse, basilar, animal, sensuous, and sometimes devilish: nevertheless it is enjoyment. If a man's life is not harmonized around about anything, then he is open to all those fluctuations and incertitudes out of which come discontent,

and trouble, and vehement sorrows. If a man wishes to be a bad man, and yet be happy, he would be wise to compel all the intellectual elements, all the moral elements, and all the social elements of his being to serve a basilar point which has been selected by him, around about which harmony is to be established. If he will make a king out of some vulgar impulse, some belluine passion, then the harmony of his nature requires that everything shall be subject to that elected king. Although it will be lurid in its character, although the life which it produces will be evil in its tendency, and although it will forfeit the future, yet in so far as the present is concerned, it will be happy.

A divided kingdom is an unhappy one; but a harmonized kingdom, even if it be the lower part of the mind that has the throne, and compels submission from the rest of the mind, is a happy one: not in so far as character is concerned, nor in so far as hope and expectation of the future are concerned; but in so far as personal happiness is concerned. No man can be happy who is at discord with himself all the time. No matter where you take your concert pitch, everything must be keyed to that point, whether it be low or middle or high.

This harmonization—this power to secure unity in every part—is very rarely facile. I suppose there are persons who inherit in the line of their ancestry an accumulating tendency toward unity and harmony in themselves. Men speak of all mankind as being sinful—as being at discord with themselves. This indicates a want of observation, and a want of knowledge. The promise is, that those who serve God shall transmit to posterity their tendencies; that moral qualities shall be thorough-bred in their children; that their children shall stand in a line of ancestry which shall bring them into this life, not perfect, but inheriting the fruit of the struggles of those who have gone before them, so that they shall possess qualities which shall render them educable far higher up on the scale than they otherwise would be. Some men are born, as it were, close by the kingdom of God.

It is not for me now to discuss what the special obligations and duties of men are; but I wish to impress upon you the fact that the process of harmonization is one which does not necessarily result through efforts and struggles of those in whom it exists, but that it may be the result of the efforts and struggles of scores or hundreds of years antecedent to the time in which they lived. But the cases are very few where this harmonization is found—though there are such cases. It is rare to find such a harmonization of a man's nature that he is adapted inwardly, and in all his parts, to all his

external surroundings, and to all his outward circumstances. In the main it is a process which is learned. We come to it by drill. The pressure to which we are subjected in life, the rude dealings of nature, of society, of those things which in the providence of God are brought to bear upon men for their education—these things are all of them so many pain-producing experiences; because they are straightening the crooked arm, as it were, that was badly set, and are relaxing the tenseness of the muscle, so to speak, which has been corrugated and hardened by disease. No man whose leg is broken has it set without pain. No man whose joint is out escapes pain when it is put in. To go from that which is lower to that which is higher; to go from a morbid state to a healthy state; to go from an imperfect condition to a more perfect condition, always carries labor-pains with it—or healing pains, which are about the same thing. It carries suffering with it.

Men often think that suffering is punishment. When they come into trouble, they say, "What have I done that God should punish me?" As if this were the supreme idea of providential grace! As if this were an honorable interpretation of the great constitution which belongs to all time, and to the race! As if suffering were necessarily punishment! Sometimes it is; but for the most part, in this world, it is not. It is said that suffering is the penalty for the violation of law. Yes, *Penalty*, but not *Punishment*. Law violated, acts back, as it were, upon men in the form of suffering; but suffering is not necessarily a sign of disfavor. It is the hint to a man that he is out of the way; but there is nothing ignoble in it. Because I am not born with a knowledge of law, I am not to blame. It is not my fault that I was a baby before I was a man. It is not my fault that I had to learn to walk, that my starch-like bones had to acquire strength in walking, and that I had to learn by stumbling. God chastises men, but not in anger. And when he is building them up; when, having sprung from the earth, they are getting rid of its dust; when they are working from lower to higher conditions; when there are a thousand things that they do not know, that have not been revealed to them, and they are set, without implements, to perform great tasks in a world like this, it is a shame to say that the troubles which come upon them are mainly punishments.

In this noble chapter, the apostle himself, whoever he is, disdains that view, and says that pain and suffering are a part of the constitution of life. This is the banner that is unrolled from the great cloud which has brooded on the earth.

"*Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.*"

That is a part of the constitution by which men are lifted from a lower to a higher sphere; from imperfection toward perfection.

The string that has been out of tune, low down, upon which the key is placed, comes groaning and sighing up to its concord; and are the sighing and groaning a sign of disgrace and penalty in the string? It must come into tune with the other strings, and the groaning and sighing are simply caused by the process of bringing about that result.

Now troubles and weaknesses are, as it were, prophets' eyes looking for strength; and the drift or intent of trouble and sorrow in the world is up-building, plentitude, reparation, restoration, and final glorification.

There are indispensable lessons of manhood which we have not by nature, which we cannot gain by volition, and which do not come by reasoning, but which may be educed in us by sorrow and suffering. For we are to consider, in looking upon the estate of man in this world, that he is, as it were, shipwrecked upon this globe—thrown up by birth. As sailors, or other poor, miserable, ignorant creatures, are, by the storm, vomited upon the rock, or on some desert shore; so the race of men are cast up and strewn over the surface of the globe; and all that is hidden in the stellar universe is nothing to them; all that is hidden in the earth keeps its secrets from them; and all that there is in the majesty of law has no revelation for them. Everything, as it were, is kept silent, and men come into life knowing nothing, either of thought, or of feeling, or of skill, or of opportunity, or of conduct. Men have to learn everything, and learn it under untoward conditions. They have to learn it from froward teachers, in rude ways. And while learning they know nothing about the learner. Who has opened the knowledge of what man is in his structure? How many thousands of years did men walk on the earth before they knew that there was any such thing as the circulation of the blood? Who knew, until within the memory of a single man, almost, the nature of a nerve, on which so much of comfort and happiness depends? Who knew anything of the bones and muscles? Where was the inventory of these things? Were men sent into life with a charter before them? Was there sent for their enlightenment a knowledge of their relations to nature? Not a word of it. Was there given to them an idea of what they were to do with their faculties in order to educate them and harmonize them? Not a word of it. The heaven was silent, and the earth was a sealed book. Men were rolled in bundles of power, but without a charter, without an interpretation, without explanation, without any means of knowing

what they were, who they were, or what they were to do. And to this hour we are trying to find an outline of what is the true unfolding of the whole of man's interior; of what is the economy of mind; of what is the relative place of the powers and passions; of how each one ought to be handled; of how they are to be brought into concord with each other; of how man is, when built up with outward things, to come into harmony with external circumstances. What a vast vacuity of knowledge there is.

And during all this period of study and research, how are men being tossed about and tried in various ways, as the result of their ignorance? If men knew what was the law of bone and muscle and nerve; if they knew how much to eat and how much to drink; if they knew how to regulate their habits so as to preserve their health, how much they might escape! If a man knew what his nature and temperament was; if he knew what was the pressure of blood per square inch upon his brain; if he knew how to harmonize his affections with his sentiments, and his sentiments with his intellectual states, and his intellectual states with his moral impulses, how much simplified the work of his life would be! But there is this vast realm where generations of men come in at one end and go out at the other, coming in darkness and disappearing in darkness; and the great mystery of life is, how to make manhood out of the elements which surround us. And what teaching is there in regard to this? What minute instruction is afforded us? What psychological or scientific accuracy has yet been attained? Where can you find anything of this kind to which men can turn with confidence?

Now, under such circumstances, no man can tell what he wants; and if there is not a super-eminent Being, a God of love and mercy who does know, and who is, by his divine providence, using all these elements so that men, in their ignorance, shall apply to themselves that which is needed to push them onward and upward, and to develop and augment them; if there is not a providence ruling over us for our good, then we must be in a most pitiable condition.

I cannot think with composure nor with toleration of the view which some men take of this matter. I cannot conceive of any cruelty so exquisite as it would be to bring into existence a globe like this, with such possibilities hidden and uninterpreted, and to put upon it a race like this, with such gigantic possibilities all unexplained, and to set them a-marching in such an endless succession of rounds, untaught, unhelped, born of sorrow, never out of sight of tears, dying in sadness, and going to destruction. I cannot look upon such a thing with allowance. It is simply a horrible phan-

tasm; and my soul is released from the burden of it only by those glowing interpretations of the goodness of God which break out, here and there, all through the Scriptures, saying that in our ignorance, in our low estate, there is a providence of grace which is adapting the circumstances of this world to our want, and is doing for us that which we need to have done, but which we do not know how to do for ourselves; and that this is the mystery of that great realm of pain, and disappointment, and bereavement, and anguish in which we are acting, but which we cannot interpret except in this general way of supposing that it is administered by the hand of a loving God, epitomized and manifested to us in the example and sayings of Jesus Christ our Lord. When I think of being under the administration of such a spirit, then my blindness, my unknowingness, and my inharmonious proportions I submit to him willingly; and I say, "If I am being educated here, if all these experiences are laying the stones that are to build that manhood which I cannot see, and if, by-and-by, when the scaffolding falls, there shall rise up a fair temple of God, thus invisibly built, though I cannot see my Teacher, nor understand the process by which the result is attained, I am satisfied." And when I see him and am like him, I shall experience a satisfaction such as this world cannot know.

Let us look at it in this point of view: that, in the care of a loving God, administered by a providence of grace, there is a conflict going on perpetually by which men are by their troubles disciplined—"exercised thereby," as it is said. For example, it is very necessary that men should learn two seemingly incompatible things. No man in this world can thrive and build himself up who does not love the world, its industries, its enterprise, and its attainments. In building outside of ourselves, we build inside, too. We learn the simple virtues, the economic necessities, by industrial life. We learn heavenly life by our intercourse with one another—by our patience and forbearance and generosity in household life. And yet, while we are so clasping the things of this life, it is necessary that we should be strangers and pilgrims. We are to be citizens; and yet we should be as those who dwell in tents. We are to build; and yet we are to be as if we were houseless. We are to accumulate; and yet we are to be as if we were in poverty. We are in every way to take root; and yet we are to be rootless.

Now, whatever other ways there are in which this may be done, we see how easily it is done by sorrows and troubles which exercise men. There is nothing which makes the world so empty, and so quickly empty, as great troubles, when they befall men: not all

troubles, but troubles that are troubles to you. There are some men who, if the foundations of their treasure-house were knocked from under them, would be crushed; but you might knock my property out from under me, and it would be no great trouble to me. I could bear it very easily; and I should deserve no credit for bearing it. That is not the point where I should suffer. There are many people who, because they have troubles which are troubles to other people, and stand up under them, think that they are proof against trouble; but, ah! it is not their trouble that they are bearing. When your trouble comes—the one that girds you, and takes hold of your very substance, and pierces your vital nerve, then you can see how you can bear trouble. In some, trouble is the dispersion of property; in some, it is the subordination of vanity; in some, it is the mortification of pride; in some, it is the taking away of a sense of power; in some, it is the destroying of affections. In various ways men are dealt with; and the same trouble does not affect all alike; but when a man has *his* trouble, it is trouble indeed.

I have known men that have gone through a great deal of rough experience, and sat and borne it well, like a ship that lustily threw off the waves on each side; but by-and-by a wave mounted their deck, and swept everything from stem to stern; and I have seen these men settle down and say, "This *is* trouble!" Ah! it found them at last, and it went to the very quick in them.

Now, bear witness, you that have had this astounding view, that, though for a time it brought discouragement, yet, after all, it left you with a sense, not of release from duty, but with another measurement of life—with a different sense of the value of things. You loved not less—perhaps more; you worked not less—perhaps more; you stored up not less—perhaps more; but, after all, there was a sense of the fugaciousness of things human; of the fugitiveness of human life. There was a sense that you were a stranger and pilgrim on earth.

There is first the joyful period. You will see young people come up gay and happy. I like to see it; but it does not last forever. I look at them by-and-by, in mid-life, and see the scars and lines which are beginning to show themselves on their once smooth features—the cinctures of trouble, which comes and stays awhile, and leaves its card. You will see persons go through this ordeal of life, and by-and-by come out with serene faces, much marred, but sweeter than before. They have gone through discipline, and planted their feet on the other side. They have come out rounded, perfected, ready to live, and ready to die whenever the summons

should come. That fact shows what their troubles have done—what their afflictions have wrought in them.

"A man's life," we are told, "consists not in the abundance of things which he possesses." Nobody believes it. One thinks, "If I should write a poem, and have my name in all the world's mouth, I should be happy." No, you would not. Another man thinks, "If I could only learn to control a first-class organ, and really attain a cathedral position, I would ask no more." You would not be any better off. You would be just as discontented, and more so. Another man says, "If I could only reach to a point of influence where I should feel that I had under my hand the government of a community, I should be contented." Did you ever know a man that had reached that point who was content? Never. Another says, "If I could reach a hundred thousand dollars, I would be willing to compromise upon that." At twenty-five years of age you would, but not at thirty. Then you would compromise on two hundred and fifty thousand. At thirty-five, you would compromise on five hundred thousand. At forty, you would compromise on a million; but at forty-five or fifty, you would not compromise on anything. Contentment does not grow in the ratio of time under such circumstances. And success in other directions, whether it be literary, whether it be social, or whether it be in the line of ambition, does not bring happiness. It certainly does not bring satisfaction. It does not bring fullness and evenness of enjoyment. The capacity for enjoyment does not hold in proportion to the acquisitions of men in this life. And the Word of God stands all the time saying to them:

"A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth."

A man's life lies deeper. It is a great thing when a man has been taught that. But the pulpit cannot teach it, as you can bear witness who have heard me preach it for twenty years, and have not yet learned the first letter of the alphabet of it. It cannot be reasoned into you. It is a thing which men will not take when it is offered to them in words. But after the teacher has passed out of sight, it may be. When they have been emptied out of happiness in the household, and emptied out of prosperity, then they accept it. Hundreds of men, after many years of instruction, and neglect thereof, all at once find themselves like an oak, which, after a tornado has gone by, lies spread upon the ground. But sometimes they learn, after awhile, that they are not clean gone, and become more happy and contented in their adversity than they were in their prosperity.

I have seen apple-trees in an orchard overturned so that four-fifths of all their roots were in the air, only the few remaining ones running into the ground; and after a summer or two the trees began to grow again, and make new roots; and thereafter they bore more apples than they ever did before. I have seen men who were never so happy as after they had been made supremely wretched.

You never yet saw a cluster that had the power in it before it had been crushed, that it had after it had been crushed and brought to wine, with much suffering from violence and fermentation. For purposes of illustration, at least, wine is *good.*

There are thousands of men who never really come to that which is in them. They never come to the joy-producing power which they possess. Their life does not consist in the abundance of *things:* it consists in quality. And although we may have come by the way of the lion or the monkey, we are neither lions nor monkeys. You and I may have come into this life by what road soever you please, but we came bearing something of God in us; and everything that is in us is to grow toward the divine, and away from that exterior fact. Nothing in us that is divine can be fed with that which is undivine. You cannot bring hatred to love; you cannot bring grimace to beauty; you cannot bring contentment to the swollen depravities of the souls of men; you cannot from beastly qualities bring joy in its active forms and final developments, with all its effervescence and fruit. These qualities are not from *things,* but from that divine nature which has been brought out into power and truthfulness.

Thus many men who, by what is called *misfortune,* are driven out of society, are a hundred times happier in obscurity and poverty than they were in the day of their glory, when all men looked upon them and envied them. When their riches were gone, and all men forgot them, or pitied them, then they were triumphant.

Trouble teaches men how much there is in manhood. He who has by trouble been taught what manhood is, has his own strong castle, his own defence; and he can walk in the midst of life contented and happy though he be frowned upon. A man may be cast down and not destroyed. A man may be happy though he is beaten and trodden under foot by the age in which he lives. There are wanderers to-day whose staff is worth a hundred times more in history than the scepters of those who sit regnant on thorns. There are men lying in dungeons who are God's vicegerents on earth. Manhood is inside of a man, and not outside of him.

These things are not taught in the academy, nor in the church,

nor anywhere except in practical life; but there they are taught abundantly. Let a man's cradle be turned over, and he finds instruction in the event. When the babe is gone out, there is a lesson left. Turn a man's household to darkness, blight his expectations, and then he is in a condition to learn. Oh, the ambition that he had for his child! And it is gone to dust. He leaned on this support, and it broke; he leaned on that, and it pierced him; he leaned on some other, and it crumbled beneath him. So long as these things upheld and nourished him, he relied on them; but by-and-by, when they failed him, he said, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." Then everybody is his. Then those that have lost children own all the children that live. Then all those that are desolated bear in their bosoms all that are sad. There is an emancipation and a largeness in this education of trouble which cannot come by theory, and which cannot be learned in any school except that of darkness and sorrow and tears. Tears are the alphabet by which God teaches us many and many a truth of wisdom that no book of philosophy gives us. We do not know what is being done at this time; but thousands of persons are going through the school, and are going to graduate into happiness, who do not know that they are scholars.

The conflict of sorrow with self-will deserves a passing notice. There are many men who are thrown up as some mountain ridge, or some granite rock, has been thrown up, which has been wrought upon by external agencies; and it stands high and dry in its grandeur, and towers above all fields; but after all it is barren and hard.

There are proud men who carry their heads high. They will have their own way. They care for nobody nor anything. They look down on men as the glacier does upon the valley below. The ice in winter splits the granite mass, and triturates it, so that, by-and-by, little by little, the mountain comes pouring down in the form of gravel and sand, sweeping off all vegetable growth. But at the base of the mountain, creeping up more and more all the time, is vegetation, as the result of the disintegration of the rock above.

So experiences of trouble, of severe dealings, with obstinate men, cover them down; and by-and-by, if nothing better is the result, they are at last covered with moss which grows from the soil that is produced from the breaking up of their self-will, their obstinacy, and their hardheartedness. When God takes these things in hand, how often do they roll down and become soil out of which spring rich growths!

Take Paul. Was there ever a man who had such a barren top-head as he had when he went raging and persecuting to Damascus? And was there ever a man over whose pride and self-will there grew such masterly beauty of vegetation, as grew over his when trouble had dealt with him?

Then there is conflict of sorrow with conceit. This is the hardest conflict of any I have mentioned; for conceit is the most incurable disease that is known to the human soul. Many of our faults of youth are cured by middle age, and many of our faults of middle age are cured by old age, through the natural unfoldings of time; but conceit, if it be present in youth, is stronger in manhood, and is strongest in old age.

"Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him."

Now, he that sows fools may expect a very poor crop; and if a conceited man has even less to expect, how poor he is! If anything can be made out of conceit, it must be done by sorrow; and sorrows of no small measure, only piercing, penetrating sorrows, are adequate to this work.

The same is true of pride. Sorrows reveal to us the unworthiness of the instruments which our pride employs, and all its aim. They temper the austerity and arrogance of pride. They take down the loftiness which one has in respect to his own person, and substitute for it loftiness of quality, loftiness of ambition. They take away from pride its hardness and harshness and unsympathizing nature.

One of the most beautiful and transcendent sights in the world is to see a real warrior whose pride has been tempered by life, so that he comes out in his old age mellow, and sympathetic, and humble, and sweet. We go to Europe to see Mont Blanc—well, that is worth seeing; we go to Zermott to see the Matterhorn—and that is worth seeing; we go down to the coast after a southern storm to see the waves come in—and they are worth seeing; we go to see the Mammoth Cave in Kentucky, and Weirs Cave in Virginia—and these are worth seeing; we go all over the world to see great sights; but I tell you that the greatest sight that you ever saw in the world is a man. And yet, though men are all round about you, you never stop to look at them. Man is the greatest work of God, who through all time, and with ten thousand hands and fingers, has been at work. And he has wrought change until all hirsuteness is lost from the exterior; until hardness is gone from the heart; until niggardliness is gone from the disposition; until inharmonious natures give forth a concordant, musical tone. Men and women

have been, as it were, reconstructed by the solemn touch and dark waves of sorrow. The world has such transformed men all around about us. We do not know them. We have them in our own houses; but as Christ came to his own, and his own received him not, so we come to our own, and we know them not. We do not know what man is. We are so little adapted to measure things in this life, that the best things about us are as if they were of no value; and we go gaping all over creation to see something wonderful.

The overcoming of the pride of riches by sorrow is a great work —a work which can scarcely be done in any other way. I do not know that riches ever cured the love of riches. I do not know that having ever cured the desire to have. The pride of skill, the pride of discovery, the pride of organization, the pride of power which men carry in them, is only curable by trouble.

There is many a man who is delivered from the power of his basilar instincts by sorrow. Many a man carries in himself a supreme feeling of princeship based on his capacity to manage men; to control things; to accumulate and organize riches. And this may be neither coarse nor vulgar. I need not say to you that I regard it as a school in which many virtues are learned. I need not tell you that I regard the development of industry in this world as one of God's primary institutions by which he lays the foundations of morality and civilization, and brings men along in the path of development. But no man ever learned the higher forms of manhood through and through by this means. No men need the touch of trouble more than men who are greatly prospered in outward things. It is not said that the rich cannot be saved; but it is said,

"How hardly shall a rich man enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for the rich to enter the kingdom of heaven."

Why is it so? It is not so—it is not so. It *is* so—it *is* so. No, it is *not* so—it is *not* so. I say it *is*. It is both. It is either. Generally a rich man strikes his roots into his riches, and undertakes to grow upon them, and by them. Where that is the case, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. But if a rich man has power such that his manhood surpasses his riches; if he has had such dealing that his faults are absolutely subordinated, and that high above all that he possesses is the possessor, so that when men look upon him they never think of his money but only of him, then it is easy for him, though he be rich, to go into the kingdom of heaven; and he will go triumphing in.

I can mention persons (but I shall not; if you think of them,

it will be you, and not me) whose names, when they are mentioned, suggest thirty million dollars or its equivalent. The moment the names of some men are pronounced, you think of them as men who are managing railroads, or carrying on financial operations—as men who are doing battle in the physical world; and their whole manhood makes no suggestion to you of anything but money. When they are dead, men say, "What! won't stocks go down?" they are men of whom it is said, "Ah! won't there be a scattering when those men die?" This is all the impression that they leave upon you and upon the world.

You might go into a man's business, and take his book, and destroy it, and he might say, "In destroying that book you have destroyed all the threads and connections of my accounts; and my affairs are in confusion; my business has gone with that book." In a great business, the man who manages it might die without being missed very seriously; but if the book in which the accounts of that business were kept was lost or burned, the business would be seriously disturbed if not destroyed.

Now, when a man represents nothing but banks, and ships, and warehouses, and bonds, and stocks, and soil, and roads, if he dies and leaves these things, there is nothing else of him, and he is without anything to take up to heaven with him which will be recognized as anything there. If a man, having these things, attempts with them to go up and pass through the gate of heaven, there is room enough for all the generations of men upon the earth, for millions of men, to go in; but the passage is not wide enough for one single railroad or bank to pass through. If a man straps his property on his back, and attempts to go through heaven's gate, he never will succeed. Riches cannot enter heaven. There is no enmity between riches and God; he made them; and the cattle on a thousand hills are his; he holds them in his hands through the whole dispensation of his providence, as promises or rewards. He rewards men or punishes them, according to what he sees to be their needs. And a man who has his whole manhood centered in his possessions—how hardly shall he enter the kingdom of God! First, because there is so little of him; and secondly, because what there is of him is like gold which is so bedded in the rock that you cannot get at it until you break the rock all to atoms.

Now, sorrows that bring down and cure this fever of loss or gain; sorrows that destroy men, apparently, oftentimes save a man—emancipate him. I have seen what I thought to be well authenticated accounts of quarries being opened, when behold, on breaking a rock, a toad was found within it, in a little chamber, as

though there had been deposits about him; as though material substances had been amassed around him. And for some reason, as the story goes, he was stupefied, but was alive. This is one of the fables of geology, if it be not a fact. And it is said that when the rock was broken open, the toad hopped out, and came to light and life again. And it was only by violence that he was got out.

There are a great many men who have just exactly such a chamber that they are shut up in. They have been pulling, pulling the soil of their property over them, till by-and-by they are imprisoned therein, like a toad in a stone; and there they are; and no man knows any difference between the living thing inside and the inanimate covering outside. What is needed is, that there should come some rending, some breaking, by which this enclosure shall be broken, and entirely removed, and that which it contains brought to life and light—not the toad, but the man. Would it not be worth while to have some such trouble for such a purpose? Would not the deliverance be a glorious one? Has not many a man gone out of his property bankrupt, and found himself outside of it? Has there not been many a man who, when he was enveloped in his property, did not know himself, and in whom nothing could be looked upon with great complacency, but who, when he was struck and splintered, when he was ground smaller and finer than the dust, and men said, "He is ruined, lost, and good for nothing," then, for the first time, began to find himself, and to be good for something?

"Are you going back on to the street again?" says a man to a millionaire that was, but is not. "No," is the reply. "What! have you lost all spirit? Is your pluck all gone? Don't you dare to try again? Do you want some help? I am perfectly willing to give you a lift." "No, I don't care for it." "Well, where are you now?" "Oh, I've gone out to such a place." "What are you doing?" "Living in a cottage, with a small bit of land, and comfortably supporting myself." "But you are a young man, and there is time enough for you to work out a splendid future in business yet. What are you doing, anyhow?" "Well, I'm doing what good I can." The man turns away, and says, "I would not be like him. Let me be overturned in my affairs as he has been, and see if I will lose all spunk, all spirit. If I were in his place, I would wrestle to the last, and die with the harness on." Yes; you *would* die with the harness on, and you would drop like a mule in your tracks!

This man who was thought to be so unfortunate did not know what there was for him in manhood or in this world till he was

dispossessed of the sorcery that had been laid upon him. The charm was broken. He began to know what peace of mind was. He began to know what it was to commune with God. He began to have an interpretation of nature which made all things sweet to him, morning, noon, and evening. Here is this great vocal book, out of which Beethoven learned, out of which every singing man learned, out of which Milton learned, and which taught Shakespeare; but men are ignorant of the very first punctuation point of this vast literature which is yours and mine and theirs. They do not study nor see what is written there. But the man who has learned, taught by trouble, to come into communion with God, and knows how to look at his fellow-men on their better sides, has about him the light of immortal peace, the joy of the Holy Ghost, and is richer than ingots of gold would make him, is happier than he would be if he sat charmed by all the flatteries of the palace, and is more prosperous than if every city had done him honor. He has found his manhood through tears and through sorrow. He has learned the way of joy and of peace.

"All that is very well," you will say, "but those are not my troubles. I neither was very proud, nor very conceited, nor very vain; nor was I avaricious of riches. I lived in God; and all I asked of him was, 'Preserve my household, and preserve me.' I prayed God that he would make me worthy to bring up my children. He knows it. I was willing to give up pleasure, the world, everything, if God would strengthen me, and help me to be faithful. There is over on the other side of the way a woman who is half her time drunk, she is not fit to be a mother; and yet, her children are healthy, and red-cheeked, and buoyant; they live, and my children, that I meant so well by, are gone. I know that I was fitter to take care of my children than she was to take care of hers; and why were mine taken, and hers spared?"

Well, wait a little. I go again, in a year, to see her, and say, "My friend, how is it with you now? Are you more peaceful?" "Somewhat." "What are you doing?" "Well, I could not bear heartache; I could not bear to have empty arms; so I gathered a few children around me, and I am trying to do a mother's part by them. I bring some of these chlidren over to my house every day, and am teaching them."

I wait another year, and go to see her again. Oh, deep-hearted woman! how many children hast thou? I look upon her now, and see that the discipline through which she has gone has made her love so deep that one might stand and say, "It is deep, and there is nothing to draw with." It is a fountain of affection that does not

stop upon blood or kinship. Where there is want, there is her sympathy; where there is need, there is her heart ready to supply it. She has been made angelic, God-like; and it is the discipline of trouble that has done it. If she had grown up a happy mother, she might have been useful; but, after all, when you measure as God does, by the disposition, where shall you find any that are so fitted for heaven as they who have been princes of suffering? I do not say that in every case suffering is the cause; I give single instances; but I say that God is a wonder-working God; that he knows better, in such a world as this, how to deal with you than others do; that by silent ways he is dissolving the rock, and making vegetation grow where it would not grow of its own accord; that he is turning the garden into a wilderness, and the wilderness into a garden; that he is taking from you and giving to you for your good; that he is doing ten thousand things for your inward purification here, and your coronation in the eternal world.

If, then, there comes an experience that you cannot read, let it be till the light of heaven interprets the letters thereof. If troubles come that you cannot bear of yourself, then lean on God. And remember, above all other things, to "look unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Your God's name is *Jesus*, the man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, now triumphant over both, and standing in the plenitude of divine wisdom and glory and power, and administering the economy of this life; so that, precious souls, by sorrow as well as by joy, you shall all be adapted and fitted for immortality and blessedness.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

O thou Spirit of life and of truth; thou bright and shining Light afar off, yet shining into us; thou who bringest us twilight whilst thou dwellest in the noon, and eternal blessedness of the summer of heaven! we draw near to thee, stumbling, lost, and full of weakness and incertitude, with pain, with sorrow, with burdens, tempted, and evermore finding the limitations of ourselves. We draw near to thee, not to ask the full revelation of thyself—we cannot attain to that; not to ask a solution of all the mysteries of life that surround us—we are not able to understand these. We draw near to thee, asking that we may have strength and comfort each day, and that they may be consciously the strength and the comfort which we have from God. We pray that we may have rising up in the midst of pleasure, and out of society, and from all our associations with each other, a thought of thy presence which not only shall make thee true, but shall interpret thee, so that in the midst of life thou shalt be nearer to us, and greater than all other things. May we be able, at least now and then, to see thee transfigured. May we be able to draw near in some hours, when we are most oppressed, and say, My God. May we in some hours, when we can say nothing, be found of thee, as he that was cast out of the synagogue; and speak thou with us, and forgive us, and heal us, and comfort us. For, not only are we far off, but we are orphaned. We are much neglected, one by another. We are bringing unfit things to each other. Our imperfections—how do they jar! And how is life filled with the discords which our souls make! As callow-birds cannot whisper even the notes which, by-and-by, in another summer, they will sing, how do our voices not utter songs, but often only groans which are the prophecies of better things! How poor and needy we are! How much do we bemoan, not only our infelicities and our infirmities, but our sins that humble us; that hew out the very life of the soul; and that are our deadly enemies, and thine! But if it were not that the brooding Spirit above was all-healing, we should be in despair. We come to thee, not as to a judge impartial and unfeeling; we draw near to thee, not as to an angry monarch whose will has been disregarded and trodden under foot; we cry out to thee as children in the night cry out to their mother. We call to thee, simply knowing how weak we are, and how much we need, and in the full faith that thou, whatever be thy name, art a present help in time of trouble. It is to thee, as to a father who pitieth his children, and knoweth their frame, that they are dust, that we come. The consolation of our life, our hope of the future, our joy of the present, is our faith in thee, and that thou art that which we need, and far more than we can conceive. Yea, as a hen sitteth upon the egg, and upon her chickens, and is fitted to them, and they are covered by her wings, and lie half-warmed by her, so dost thou gather under thy wings those that put their trust in thee, and fit thyself to them, lending thyself to them, and thy life to their life.

In this helpful God, in this forgiving and loving God, in this God that will not suffer men to go wrong, but that, by ten thousand instrumentalities, visible and invisible, art shaping all things to rectitude, to purity, and to truth—in this God, who guides the groaning realm which travails in pain until now, and guides it for the consummation of victory, when righteousness shall prevail, and imperfections shall die, and death itself shall be overcome—in this God we trust. To this God we cry out. And in the plenitude of hope, in the fullness of joy, we draw near to thee, O thou all-helpful One!

And now, what need we to ask for? In the conception of thee we have all that can be given us. We rest in the Lord.

Grant, then, that every one in thy presence to-day may be able to take from thee that strength which he needs. May those that have cares which gird them as the harness girds the skin, and chafes to the soreness thereof, be able to rest themselves, casting away, to-day, their harness and their cares. May those who are tempted more than they can bear, and who maintain through the week a sense of shame by reason of inconstancy and of a perpetual coming short of their purposes, stumbling and reeling where they meant to have walked strongly—may they, to-day, find rest in God, and peace in trusting to him. Grant that every one that hath fallen may be lifted up. May those that have wandered be brought back. Why should any set their faces toward darkness? Why should any go away from the garden toward the wilderness? Why should any go away from fragrant things that are sweeter in the crushing? And why should any be torn of thorns and of thistles? Bring back thy wandering ones.

We beseech of thee that thou wilt draw near to any who are in trouble; to any that have experienced sudden overthrow; to any whose plans, nourished and built carefully for years, are, as it were, swept away by the strength of thy right hand, so that what in rising may seem to them a stately fabric is now only dust to their sight.

Be near, we pray thee, to those who are in the midst of bereavements and great sorrows. In their darkness may they find light. In their solitude may they hear the voice of consolation. And may that be done for them by the hand of God—by the pierced hand—which no one can do for them among their friends. Enter thou, O Spirit of all comfort! into bereaved hearts, to cheer them, and to help them, and to lift them, and to give them light and patience, and an uncomplaining disposition. Still may there rise above all their thought the beauty and the strength of the love of God, who is the Author and will be the Finisher of that faith which is wrought out in sorrow and affliction.

We pray that thou wilt deliver from doubt all those who lie becalmed off the shore where thou art, yet unable to see the land, or move. We pray that thou wilt cause the wind to rise and blow away the mists that hide thee from them; and we pray that thou wilt bring them to the harbor of peace, to trust, to faith, to consecration, to activity in things good.

We beseech of thee that thou wilt grant thy blessing to rest upon all those who are gathered together this morning, out of the families of this great church—this Christian household. Sanctify their joy or their sorrow in the manifold and checkered experiences of life. May they all be so many things which are upbuilding those who are waiting for life and immortality.

We pray that thou wilt remember those who do not remember themselves nor their duties—the children of parents who are gone; those who were taught to pray, and have forgotten how; those who knew the right way, and have fallen out of it; those whom men turn against; those whom no man succors, and against whom so many hearts are sealed.

We pray for those who are sick, for those who are imprisoned, and for those who are set apart unto death.

We pray for the great human family.

O God, we ask not to interpret thy providence. We ask not any more to know the meaning of it; we ask not any more to know the unfoldings of the future: we simply ask to know thee. The knowledge of God is wisdom. Give us so much knowledge of thee that, in light or in darkness, in mystery or in charity, in things hidden or in things revealed, we may be able to say, I know that my Redeemer liveth. And living in this sacred trust, may we be peaceful, and hopeful, and expectant, and may we be able to die at rest,

undisquieted, rejoicing in coming glory, and in the hope of redemption through Christ. And looking forward to a blessed meeting, may we bid farewell to this life, and enter the life to come, to be forever with the Lord.

And to thy name shall be the praise, Father, Son, and Spirit. *Amen.*

PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

Our Father, we beseech of thee to grant thy blessing to rest upon us. Shape the blessing to thine own indwelling; and abide with us, not in the evening alone, but in the morning and in the day. Interpret to us what thou wilt; and grant that we may have that faith in thee which shall be beyond all interpretation. May our hope be, not in this, nor in that, but in God. There may we stand; there may we rejoice; there may we find quiet when the storm is out. Hide us in thy pavilion until the storm be past. When the burdens are heavy, thou, Burden-bearer, touch them, not that they may fall from us, but that there may be imparted to us the strength which is necessary to carry them. May we be able every day to say, Thy will be done. So may we live, and so dying, may we live again in that land where prayers are needed no longer, but where praises shall sound forever. And to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit shall be the praise. *Amen.*

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